

THE BRACKETT MAIL.

Volume 1.

Brackett, Kinney County, Texas, Thursday, May 3, 1906.

No. 15.

Indian Fight at Las Moras Spring in 1840.

Description of a Battle Between Whites and Indians in the Early Days When Kinney County was the Hunting Ground of the Comanches and Lipans.

BY A. J. SOWELL.

The main incidents leading up to the fight with the Indians at the famous spring in Kinney county was first the treaty made with the Comanches in the spring of 1840, and the burning of Linnville and battle of Plum Creek in the following summer. The treaty was held in San Antonio and one of the stipulations, and a very important one too, was the delivery of all white captives then in the hands of the Comanches. At the time designated about thirty of the principal chiefs and warriors with their squaws and children assembled and the red men went into council with the treaty commissioners of the whites. Soon a heated discussion arose. The Indians had failed to comply with the terms. Only one white captive, Matilda Lockhart, was produced. They claimed she was all they had, but the girl herself denied this, stating that many others were held under a large band back in the mountains. In the end the white men attempted to hold the Indians in captivity until all the white prisoners held by them were delivered. The Comanches would not submit to this and attacked the white men with great fury in the council house. As a precautionary measure Captain Tom Howard with a company of rangers had been stationed on the outside and but for these none of the peace

commissioners would have escaped as they were unarmed. During the short but desperate fight several of the rangers were killed or wounded and among the killed was the gallant Lieutenant Dunnington. About fourteen other whites were killed and in this list were Judge Hood and the sheriff of Bexar county. The Indian chiefs and warriors were all killed.

On the following day Mrs. Webster came to town in an almost nude condition, her flesh badly torn and scratched by thorn and bramble. She had been captured on the San Gabriel after a desperate battle in which her husband and thirteen other men were killed. Mrs. Webster confirmed the statement of Matilda Lockhart as to the other captives included in which were the Putnam children, taken at the same time with the Lockhart girl on the Guadalupe river in DeWitt colony.

In retaliation for the slaughter of the chiefs in San Antonio a large body of Indians invaded the settled portions of Texas and ravaged the country to the coast, including Victoria and wound up at the little sea coast town of Linnville which they sacked and burned. From here they commenced their retreat back to the mountains and so strong was their force, about 600 warriors, they well nigh escaped before

settlers enough could be collected to make a successful fight with them. At Plum Creek, however, where the town of Lockhart now is, in Caldwell county, 200 white men overtook them. In this force was a company of rangers from the Colorado under Captain Ed. Burleson and the noted frontiersmen, Caldwell, McCulloch and Hays from the Guadalupe with their followers. It was a long drawn and running battle of fifteen miles winding up at the foot of the Blanco Mountains near where the town of Kyle is now. The Indians suffered great loss without inflicting much damage on their enemies.

In the fall of this same year the whites in retaliation for the great Indian raid planned two expeditions into the Comanche strongholds of the West, the plan being to find and fight the Indians wherever they might be if they could locate them. Jack Hays had already been commissioned by Gen. Sam Houston to raise a company of rangers and at this time was operating in the Guadalupe and Nueces Mountains and having some desperate engagements. These bands, however, which Hays fought were marauders and their trails either led northwest, southwest or west indicating strong camps somewhere.

When the complement of men for the two expeditions were collected and organized, Col. John H. Moore of the Colorado, was placed in command of the one to operate to the northwest and Capt. Tom Howard led the expedition west of San Antonio. The men under Howard numbered 170. These included his own company of rangers and that of Captain Matthew Caldwell. The

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balance of the force were volunteer settlers but all under the command of Howard who held the rank of Colonel. Captain Caldwell was one of the peace commissioners at the time of the council house fight in San Antonio and narrowly escaped there. Two chiefs attacked him and he was about to sink under their blows with knife and tomahawk when they were killed by some of Howards rangers who had forced their way into the house.

Scouts were kept at all times ahead of the expedition and when it crossed the Nueces river many signs of Indians were seen until their main camp was discovered at the Las Moras Spring. The scouts informed Colonel Howard that the country was very open, no brush or timber through which the camp could be approached except along the banks of Las Moras creek which ran south toward the Rio Grande. The scouts also stated that near a thousand head of horses and mules were under herd in the valley above camp. As the Indians were resting in fancied security the whites never having penetrated this far west in force before Howard concluded he could surprise them and advanced rapidly, his men being mounted. The advance of the whites was made through low flats and nothing could be seen as to the Indians until the crest of a high ridge was reached east of the camp, or village, for many tepees were there. Half a mile to the right, in the valley near the foot of the hills, the horses and mules grazed. Howard's men advanced rapidly but now nothing obstructed the view to the camp of the hostiles about a mile away and the white men were discovered. To say the Indians were surprised puts it mildly; they were panic stricken and

fled in great crowds to the west and down Las Moras creek, many of these being women and children. A strong body of warriors made a stand on the west side of the creek along the foot of the ridge on which Fort Clark is built but soon gave way before the fatal fire of the rifles. A great deal of noise and confusion prevailed. Settlers and Indians covered a mile or more of country—Indian warriors yelling, squaws and papooses screaming, white men yelled also and to add to the terror of the scene the great herd of mules and horses up the valley stampeded and their running made a noise like the near approach of a cyclone. In less than an hour not an Indian was in sight except the dead warriors 20 of whom were found. Some squaws and children were accidentally killed but hundreds of them made their escape. Among the white men many were hurt but not one lost his life. Horses fell with some and others bogged in the creek trying to cut the Indians off from below. Most of the men hurt by Indians was with arrows and generally in personal combats.

After the battle men were detailed to follow and gather the stampeded horses and mules and 700 were collected and returned to their owners in the settlements east. Among the men in Capt. Caldwell's company from the Guadalupe were William Tumlinson, Dan Grady, Calvin Turner, Creed Taylor and John Gattes. The facts herein stated were told by men in the battle. Calvin Turner was an uncle of the writer but long since deceased, and the main facts were told the writer by Creed Taylor who is still living at a very advanced age.

Col. Moore had a battle later in

the upper San Saba in which 50 Indians were killed and many horses captured.

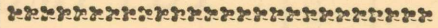
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PUBLISHED EVERY THURSDAY.

Application made for admission as second-class mail matter

CHARLES KARTES, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.
ROBERT PAUL, CORRESPONDENT, FORT CLARK.

 EDITORIAL COMMENT. 

Fort Clark is not abandoned yet, and there is very good reason to believe that it will not be.

Some of the people who are loudest in crying 'woe unto Brackett if we lose Clark,' would have the novel experience of hunting a job.

First Cavalry to 'Frisco.

Six troops and the band, under command of Colonel Hughes, left Wednesday for San Francisco. C of the Twenty-sixth Infantry arrived at Fort Clark Tuesday and will be stationed here temporarily. This move of the troops, coming so soon after the talk of abandoning the post, has led many people to believe it is a fact, but Congress has not approved General Humphries recommendation, and is not likely to do so.

The Daily Express, in conjunction with Congressman Slayden and the merchants of San Antonio, has been working for the enlargement of Fort Sam Houston, and to attain this end is fighting, and has fought Brackett for years in every attempt she has made towards the retention of troops or the upbuilding of Fort Clark. The Express says "that the removal of the 1st Cavalry is prophetic of the abandonment of Ft. Clark." The Express has posed as a prophet for long years, and its prophecies have always portended evil to this western section of the State. San Antonio derives an immense trade from this western country that she is going to lose. The merchants are getting tired of paying her tribute and having their throats cut at will. It is time for us to take up the fight and let it be to a finish. Let the watchword be "On to Houston!"



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